

NEW EDITION



HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF
RWANDA

AIMABLE TWAGILIMANA

Historical Dictionary of Rwanda

New Edition

Aimable Twagilimana

Historical Dictionaries of Africa, No. 105



The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
Lanham, Maryland • Toronto • Plymouth, UK
2007

SCARECROW PRESS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Scarecrow Press, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of
The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.scarecrowpress.com

Estover Road
Plymouth PL6 7PY
United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Twagilimana, Aimable.

Historical dictionary of Rwanda / Aimable Twagilimana. — New ed.
p. cm. — (Historical dictionaries of Africa ; no. 105)

Rev. ed. of: Historical dictionary of Rwanda / Learthen Dorsey. 1994.
Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8108-5313-3 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8108-5313-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Rwanda—History—Dictionaries. I. Dorsey, Learthen. Historical dictionary of
Rwanda. II. Title.

DT450.115.D67 2007
967.571003—dc22

2007021577

∞TM The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of
American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper
for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.
Manufactured in the United States of America.

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INTRODUCTION

Before the April–July 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the overwhelming majority of books and articles about Rwanda were written by European scholars, or their Rwandan students in Rwanda or in Europe, particularly in Belgium and France. Rwanda's historical ties with these two countries meant that most of these were written in French. After the genocide, however, writers from all over the world, including Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, have shown sustained effort in the attempt to understand the evil of evils—genocide—that befell the Tutsi of Rwanda and the Hutu who opposed the killing or who sheltered the Tutsi. The dramatic increase of interest in Rwanda is shown by the number of books written in both English and French after 1994, as reflected in this bibliography.

Prior to German and Belgian colonization, Rwanda, like most African countries, did not have a tradition of written literature. This historical reality explains the scarcity of books about Rwanda before 1900, the year the White Fathers introduced Christianity and formal education to Rwanda. From the 1890s to the late 1950s, writings about Rwanda were mostly the products of European missionaries, ethnologists, anthropologists, and historians. The few writers who were Rwandan natives, such as Father Alexis Kagame, an indigenous Catholic priest, were heavily influenced by European views of Africa. The preponderance of European scholars, particularly Belgian and French, continued after Rwanda received its independence on 1 July 1962. Given the absence of any substantial number of educated Rwandans, the Belgians

and the French continued to dominate the education sector, particularly in high schools and in institutions of higher learning, for at least three decades. Furthermore, even though both Kinyarwanda and French were official languages, French was the language of instruction from elementary school to the university. All these factors meant that the scholarship about Rwanda, particularly regarding its history, continued to be written in French and was dominated by ideas produced during the colonial period.

Many books in the following bibliography are about the genocide, the single most important event that understandably shaped Rwandan institutions after 1994. Other developments include the addition of English as an official language along with Kinyarwanda and French. This linguistic development is due to the fact that the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which took power in July 1994, was dominated by former Rwandan refugees who had grown up in English-speaking Uganda. It is a known fact in Rwanda that the “Ugandans,” as they are sometimes referred to, dominate the Rwandan military and political decision-making elites.

Except for Internet sources, there are no international journals or periodicals that regularly cover Rwanda, but occasional articles appear in *Jeune Afrique*, a weekly in French published in Paris. *Dialogue* is another relatively regular publication, edited in Brussels since 1994. Before the 1994 genocide, it was published in Kigali, Rwanda. Started at the initiative of the Catholic Church but with a largely secular editorial board, it covers political, economic, and cultural affairs.

Other sources of information about Rwanda include the *African Contemporary Record* (published in New York City), *Africa South of the Sahara* (published in London), annual reports by such organizations as Human Rights Watch (based in New York City, with a field office in Kigali), Amnesty International, and the U.S. State Department. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and African Rights (based in London) also publish regular reports to alert the world about human rights violations in Rwanda and other parts of the world.

The 1994 genocide brought Rwanda to the world's attention. Evidence of this is found in the many books written on the subject, including personal narratives, novels, research-based monographs, and various accounts of the genocide and its national, regional, and international repercussions. Some of the noteworthy publications include Gérard